



MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

NOAA
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION

April 2003

GLOUCESTER, MA OFFICE, ONE BLACKBURN DRIVE, GLOUCESTER, MA 01930

BUZZARDS BAY OIL SPILL

On April 28, a barge headed for the Mirant Power Station in Sandwich, MA released 14,700 gallons of No. 6 fuel oil. This is the largest spill in Buzzards Bay in the past 25 years. While the quantity wasn't large compared to previous spills, the effects were felt throughout Buzzards Bay. Approximately 40 miles of shoreline was oiled. Over 700 workers have responded by skimming the water of oil, or hand cleaning and raking a shoreline composed of beaches, cobble, and rocks. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts closed shellfish beds throughout the bay. Several restoration projects initiated for the New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site have been impacted including purchased properties in Fairhaven and common and roseate tern nesting islands. A Natural Resource Damage Assessment is being conducted to assess the natural resource injury associated with the spill. **(Jack.Terrill@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9136)**

HOUGHS NECK "MARSH MADNESS" MEETING WITH CONGRESSMAN BILL DELAHUNT

On April 28, Congressman Bill Delahunt (10th District, MA) toured a number of active and developing salt marsh restoration sites with local, state, and federal agency representatives. The restoration sites were located in the Houghs Neck section of the Congressman's hometown of Quincy, Massachusetts. The tour focused on the Mallard Road salt marsh restoration project which will be constructed in early summer with technical and financial assistance from the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program (CRP). The project has helped facilitate a strong local, grass-roots initiative in Quincy to restore additional degraded marine habitats and restore the fisheries that in years past led Quincy Bay to be referred to as the "flounder capital of the world."

Following the tour, the Congressman attended and participated in the bi-annual "Marsh Madness" meeting. There he expressed to a crowd of over 100 residents his enthusiasm for facilitating additional federal support for coastal habitat restoration in Quincy and throughout his congressional district. The meeting included a public review and discussion on the draft final plans for the Mallard Road project, and a slide show about a similar NOAA restoration project in Rockport, MA, which visually helped demonstrate to Quincy residents the benefits of these projects. **(Eric Hutchins, 978/ 281-9313)**

JAMES J. HOWARD MARINE SCIENCES LABORATORY, HIGHLANDS, NJ 07732

NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY HARBOR - AMBROSE CHANNEL

HCD staff attended the subcommittee meeting on the Ambrose Channel, New York Harbor Deepening at the New York District, Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) offices. The ACOE is interested in exploring ways to accelerate the deepening of the harbor and reducing the project's cost to the taxpayers. The Ambrose Channel may provide a way to accomplish this. The channel has between 10 and 13 million cubic yards of sand that will need to be dredged under the deepening. The current schedule has the channel being deepened beginning in mid-2006. Between now and 2006, there may be an opportunity to allow private entities to mine the sand from the channel before the federal project begins. This could potentially reduce the volume of sand the ACOE would need to remove and would also reduce the time needed and the cost of the federal dredging. The interagency attendees discussed the logistics of authorizing this type of activity and the next steps for judging the level of interest by the industry. HCD staff commented that if the dredging schedule and equipment changed, both the essential fish habitat consultation and the Endangered Species Act consultation needed to be reinitiated because the scope of the project would change. **(Karen Greene, 732/ 872-3023)**

BLASTING EFFECTS MEETING

HCD staff at Sandy Hook hosted a meeting sponsored by the New York ACOE to discuss the effects of blasting on fish. As part of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Water Quality Certificate for the Kill van Kull deepening, the ACOE is required to develop a monitoring plan to assess the effects of the rock blasting on fish in the area. The ACOE brought in two experts from the St. Louis District office as well as two of their contractors for the project. The ACOE's presentation was both very interesting and very informative. The discussion included how the changes in pressure can be measured, what caused the damage to fish, and how to assess the effects. With the assistance of the St. Louis District, the New York District has developed a scope of work for the monitoring for the agencies to review. **(Karen Greene, 732/ 872-3023)**

HACKENSACK MEADOWLANDS

MEADOWLANDS INTERAGENCY MITIGATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MIMAC)

The monthly MIMAC meeting included the discussion of two public notices for fill in the Meadowlands. The Port Authority proposes to fill freshwater wetlands and tidal ditches in order to make some runway improvements to Teterboro Airport. Midway Limited Liability Company wants to fill freshwater wetlands, including some forested wetlands associated with a tidal ditch for the construction of a parking lot for an adjacent property owner. Both applicants propose to buy credits at the Marsh Resources Mitigation Bank. However, since the mitigation bank is all tidal wetlands, it may not be appropriate to use those credits to offset the impacts of these two projects. In both cases, the MIMAC requested that the applicants provide additional information on 404 b (1) compliance and mitigation options. The meeting also coincided with the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission's dedication of a memorial area for the victims of the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center. The NJMC constructed a small viewing area over the Kingsland Impoundment that faces the New York City skyline where the towers once stood. The area also includes a sculpture of the skyline, benches and plantings. The NJMC did a very nice, tasteful job of creating a memorial that honors the memories of the victims and their families. **(Karen Greene, 732/ 872-3023)**

SALEM NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

The Habitat Conservation Division prepared a briefing document for Dr. Hogarth on the Division's involvement with the Salem NGS, located adjacent to the Delaware River in Salem County, New Jersey. Dr. Hogarth requested the document as preparation for a meeting with representatives of Public Service Electric and Gas Company, the parent company of the Salem NGS. (**Stan Gorski, 732/ 872-3037**)

NEW JERSEY REGIONAL SEDIMENT MANAGEMENT COORDINATION MEETING: Habitat staff attended a meeting in Cape May on April 29, 2003 hosted by the Philadelphia Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and was attended by state and federal agencies involved in permit review. The ACOE presented their Regional Sediment Management (RSM) Program and discussed the program's concept, "to develop tools and knowledge necessary to understand the effects of sediment management actions on both local and regional scales, including development of methods and procedures needed to create regional plans. The subject crosses all landscapes from the upper watershed to the coasts."

Lessons learned from one demonstration project on the Indian River in Alabama, which used the RSM, can be applied to another demonstration project being proposed in Cape May and Wildwood, New Jersey. The beaches in Wildwood, New Jersey are currently very wide and are making public access to the water difficult. The Wildwood beaches continue to grow because longshore currents move sand continually from the north. The jetties at the Cape May Inlet prevent the sand from moving south to the Cape May beaches which are losing sand at a dramatic rate southward, and which are in great need of replenishment. The ACOE RSM demo project would take the excess sand from the Wildwood beaches and use it to replenish the beaches in Cape May. Several methods are being investigated to move the sand such as pipeline bypass, panscrape and barge, pipeline dredge, and pipeline eductor methods. Habitat staff discussed issues related to habitat protection and direct and indirect impacts on fisheries resources that would be involved in such a project, and explained the essential fish habitat requirements under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. (anita.riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)

CROSS HARBOR FREIGHT MOVEMENT PROJECT

HCD staff from Sandy Hook and Milford attended the third meeting of the Cross Harbor Freight Project at the offices of the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC). The NYCEDC is in the process of preparing an environmental impacts statement (EIS) to evaluate several new ways to move freight across the Hudson River. The purpose of the meeting was to update the various interested agencies on the project and the progress on the EIS. Alternatives include no action, transportation systems management, expanded float operations, and the construction of a rail freight tunnel.

Two potential alignments for the freight tunnel are being considered, either from Staten Island to Brooklyn or from the Greenville Yards in Jersey City, NJ to Brooklyn. The tunnel from Staten Island would consist of two tubes bored under the harbor. In addition, the Arthur Kill lift bridge would need to be twinned and five acres of wetlands in the Old Place Creek Special Natural Waterfront area would be filled.

If the New Jersey alignment is used, a portion of the tunnel adjacent to New Jersey would be constructed using the immersed tube construction. This will require the dredging, placing of the tubes, and refilling the trench in an area adjacent to the Jersey Flats, a regionally important area

where winter flounder spawn. Both tunnel alignments would involve filling open waters of Maspeth Creek for the construction of an intermodal yard in Queens. HCD is concerned about the impacts on resources of concern to us including essential fish habitat (EFH), if the selected preferred alternative is a freight tunnel. Piecemealing the project by constructing only one tube now with the other to be built in the future is also a concern if the EIS does not address adequately the entire scope of the project impacts. An EFH assessment for the various project alternatives is needed. The preliminary draft EIS is scheduled to be released for agency review in May with the draft EIS going out to the public sometime this summer. **(Karen Greene 732/ 872-3023 or Diane Rusanowsky, 203/ 882-6504)**

MILFORD, CT OFFICE, 212 ROGERS AVENUE, MILFORD, CT 06460

PASSENGER TERMINAL FACILITIES EXPANSION PROPOSED

Operators of the Passenger Ship Terminal in New York City have requested Department of the Army authorization to expand their facilities in the Hudson River on Manhattan's West Side. If approved, the enlarged structures would assist in loading and offloading passengers, luggage, and supplies while ships are in port. The Milford Field Office is reviewing the application and EFH assessment for the proposed activities and will provide comments to the New York District, Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) in May. The proposed activities will affect EFH and overwintering habitat for juvenile striped bass. **(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

MARINE TRANSPORTATION PROJECT PROPOSED IN COEYMANS, NY

The Milford Field Office is reviewing an application by P&M Brick, LLC to perform dredging and construct structures in the Hudson River at the Town of Coeymans, Albany County, New York. The project site was formerly used as a commercial brick yard and industrial marina. The project plans call for establishing a waterfront loading/offloading zone and re-establishing an artificial canal and attendant structures. The Milford Field Office will be completing coordination with the New York District, ACOE in the coming weeks. **(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

VOLUNTARY CLEANUP OF INDUSTRIAL SITE ON STATEN ISLAND

Nassau Metal Corporation is proposing to perform sediment remediation and bank stabilization activities, at their industrial site in Mill Creek, a primary tributary of the southernmost reaches of the Arthur Kill, Staten Island, Richmond County, New York. The site is contaminated from previous plant operations. The proposal calls for removing the first foot or so of sediment, installing a layer of geotechnical filter fabric, and backfilling the area with clean sand. The area also would be planted with intertidal vegetation. Contaminated sediment horizons would remain beneath the filter fabric. The Milford Field Office is reviewing the Public Notice for this application and expects to receive an EFH assessment detailing the project impacts from the ACOE soon. **(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**